

**Delegate Samuel I. "Sandy" Rosenberg
41st District**

2006 General Assembly Session Newsletter

Dear Friends:

"This bill is about a thing called hope." That's what I said on the floor of the House of Delegates when we passed the Maryland Stem Cell Research Act of 2006. I am very proud to be the sponsor of this law. Embryonic stem cell research will touch more lives and offer more hope than any other issue I've worked on in my 24 years as a legislator.

A 72% increase in your utility bill and the state's proposed takeover of 11 Baltimore City schools were crucial issues this session. I voted for the bill that would have required Constellation Energy to provide \$600 million in rate relief for customers. The company initially offered \$150 million. Since the Governor's appointees to the Public Service Commission have not protected the public interest, the legislation also provided for the appointment of new members. Since this bill did not pass, we need a special session of the General Assembly to prevent the 72% rate hike.

I supported the one-year moratorium on the state's taking control of these poorly performing schools because it will disrupt a major effort to reform them, funded, in part, by local and national philanthropies. One of these schools, Northwestern Senior High, is in the 41st District. I will work with all of the stakeholders to improve students' academic performance there.

I write below about the legislation that I introduced this session. I welcome your comments.



EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH

Microscopic embryos hold great promise for treating many diseases and debilitating injuries. We need to fund this research in Maryland because President Bush has prohibited it at the federal level.

Under the legislation that Senator Hollinger and I introduced, state dollars will support research with embryonic stem cells only if they are derived from in-vitro

fertilization and would otherwise be frozen or destroyed. The donors of these embryos will sign a form indicating that they have made an informed and voluntary choice to do so.

A scientific peer review committee will recommend which proposals should be funded. The bill draws a clear line between therapeutic cloning for research and human cloning for reproductive purposes, which is criminalized.

Embryonic stem cells hold more promise for research than adult stem cells, scientists believe, because they can generate any body cell type. Two examples: a pancreas cell to cure diabetes or a brain cell to address Alzheimer's. Adult stem cells have a more limited potential to generate diverse cell types.

Even though the bill is now law, there's still work to be done. We must ensure that the fifteen people appointed to the Stem Cell Research Commission will fund research that holds the greatest promise.

I had the pleasure of working on this bill with many people who will benefit from it. Among them are Van Brooks, whose football career has ended but not his battle to recover from his spinal cord injury; former Governor Harry Hughes, whose wife has Parkinson's and his grandson juvenile diabetes; and John Kellerman, who also has Parkinson's and wants to dance at his daughter's wedding.

I also worked with scientists, whose research has been crippled by President Bush's restrictions, and entrepreneurs, who want to fund the fruits of this research so that Maryland can remain a leader in biotechnology.

PRESERVING YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE

Imagine the confusion on Election Day, especially among senior citizens, if your polling place has been changed, after being in the same location for decades. The only notice you receive under existing law is a voter registration card in the mail, with no attention drawn to your new polling place.

Voters in Baltimore City will now have the opportunity to object to such a change - 90 days in advance of the election.

That's because Senator Lisa Gladden and I both introduced the Voter Rights Protection Act of 2006. The provisions of that bill are now law.

The Baltimore City Board of Elections will make regular reports to the state on the number and types of voter registration applications received, how many applications were accepted and how many were rejected, and why those applications were rejected.

In addition, no voter can be purged from the voting rolls within 30 days of an election. Any deletion must to be posted on the Internet.

We don't want a repeat of what happened in Florida prior to the Bush-Gore fiasco in 2000. Voter registration applications were rejected and people's names were stricken from the voting rolls - in predominantly African-American communities.

EMINENT DOMAIN

"I don't wish nobody to happen to this," said Yung Robinson, a Korean-American business owner. She had to move as part of the Hippodrome Theater renovation. She testified at a hearing on the 28 House bills that were introduced on eminent domain.

Most were prompted by the Supreme Court's decision in *Kelo v. City of New London* last June. The court ruled that the government can condemn someone's property and sell it to a for-profit business for economic development. "Replacing any Motel 6 with a Ritz-Carlton," wrote Justice O'Connor in dissent.

I began working on this issue before this controversial case. I've successfully

sponsored two bills that enhance Baltimore City's authority to condemn blighted properties. Five years ago, I introduced legislation which would have compensated business owners who suffer a loss of goodwill because condemnation forced them to move.

That measure died, but I did pass a bill in 2004 that created a task force to study compensation for owners whose property has been condemned, plus the issues raised by the *Kelo* case, which was then pending.

That task force recommended increases in compensation and a requirement that existing businesses be given the opportunity to return to an area after it has been condemned and redeveloped. The authority of local government to condemn property for economic development was left untouched.

Bills reflecting this compromise approach were given favorable committee reports in both houses of the legislature. However, an attempt to attach a constitutional amendment prohibiting eminent domain for economic development resulted in the bills being sent back to committee, where they died.

I will continue to seek a middle ground.

TEACH FOR MARYLAND

Encouraging people to enter public service is one of my passions. My legislation will help 100 individuals become teachers.

Teach for America sent 2,200 recent college graduates to schools in poor communities this fall. However, this 21st Century Peace Corps rejected 15,000 applicants. "Should we try to get some of those 15,000 into Maryland classrooms?" I asked Nancy Grasmick, State Superintendent

of Schools, when she spoke to my Legislation Class at Maryland Law School.

The result: the Maryland Alternative Teaching Opportunity Program. This legislation will encourage more people to enter alternative teacher preparation programs by providing them critical financial support while they complete required summer internships. House Bill 794 meets the most pressing needs in our schools by providing stipends only to candidates who intend to teach science, mathematics and special education.

The 100 people who receive this aid must commit to teach in a Maryland public school for at least three years. Not all of them will be 22 years old. Some will be switching professions; some will be retired military. Many of them will teach in Baltimore City. I'll try to expand this program in the future.

PROTECTING OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

I worked with my 41st District colleagues, Senator Lisa Gladden and Delegates Jill Carter and Nathaniel Oaks, on several neighborhood issues this session.

The Red Line mass transit system will run through the heart of the neighborhoods in the Edmondson Avenue corridor. We successfully sponsored legislation creating an Advisory Council to review the route the line will take; the means of transit - bus, light or heavy rail; and jobs for neighborhood residents in the line's construction and operation. We also helped to restore bus service on the M6 in Howard Park and the #61 in Roland Park.

Fairmount residents are very concerned about what a new owner will do to

a property in the heart of their community. We're bringing about mediation. The grocery store at Liberty Heights and Hillsdale has been shuttered for six long years. In that time, supermarkets have opened in several other City neighborhoods. We're working to bring a new store to Liberty Heights.

The Roland Patterson Academy is one of the City schools that will close under a restructuring plan. We're going to rename another school in memory of Dr. Patterson and plan the future use of the site.

Finally, the University of Baltimore will not be selling its Rogers Avenue athletic fields. Over the last two years, we have worked with Mt. Washington residents to persuade the university to preserve this green oasis.

TASK FORCE ON GREEN BUILDINGS

Green buildings improve the quality of the environment and reduce our dependence on foreign oil. They reduce runoff and other pollution in the Chesapeake Bay. They also conserve energy. However, to get this long-term savings, there are up-front costs.

I successfully introduced House Bill 1211, which creates a task force to study how to encourage the construction of green buildings. It will focus on what incentives and disincentives are most important to implementing a green building program. The task force will explore the most effective and cost-efficient ways of making Maryland a national leader in green buildings.

This was not my first "green" bill. Enactment of the green buildings tax credit five years ago was a milestone in encouraging construction of buildings with minimal

environmental impact. As the state continues to grow, we must encourage developers to construct buildings that conserve energy, utilize green building materials, and follow environmentally sound design principles.

PRICE GOUGING

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, gas prices in Maryland soared to the 3rd highest in the nation, a full 20 cents above the national average. Gas station owners changed their signs several times a day as the largest price surge in American history hammered motorists nationwide. While many suspected that unscrupulous price gouging was partly to blame, our state government was powerless to investigate whether these prices for an essential commodity were artificially high.

Attorney General Curran asked me to introduce House Bill 580, which would put an end to these abuses and protect the rights of Maryland consumers in times of crisis. The bill would ban increases for essential goods or services more than 10% above the highest pre-disaster price. Thirty states have similar laws. Nonetheless, business interests killed my bill.

CIVIL RIGHTS - YOUR DAY IN COURT

All Maryland citizens who are victims of unlawful discrimination in employment or public accommodations should have access to state courts. The right to be free of discrimination means little for many victims because they lack an effective remedy for discrimination at the state level. Your ability to win in federal court would be limited if President Bush's two Supreme Court appointments reverse civil rights holdings where Justice O'Connor was the swing vote.

That's why I introduced the Civil Rights Preservation Act of 2006. This legislation would guarantee all Marylanders their day in court for violations of the state's fair employment and public accommodations laws. My bill would not create any new substantive rights; it simply makes it feasible to effectively enforce existing protections.

The bill did not pass, but I will work with civil rights groups to build the support necessary for its enactment next year.

VOLUNTARY SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

If you are self-employed or work for a small business, you probably don't have the opportunity to put away money for your retirement in tax-deferred savings accounts. The state can increase participation in pension plans by helping private employers sponsor retirement plans. The State already does this for its own employees.

That's why I introduced House Bill 1414, which would create a Voluntary Employee Accounts Program. It would be administered by the state. Participation by the private sector would be hassle free and voluntary.

The response to my bill was very positive. However, it will be further studied this summer because pension law is so complex.

HELPING PEOPLE IN NEED

We face new challenges in helping people move from welfare to work. The Congress has increased the work participation rates for mothers receiving benefits. As one of the General Assembly's leaders in welfare reform for the past decade, I was instrumental in requiring the executive branch to report by August 1 on its efforts to broaden work

activity requirements and provide assistance to families as they make the transition to work.

Many of the children in these families lack an engaged, caring mentor. Volunteers can serve as a positive role model. I hoped to swell the ranks of qualified mentors by allowing state employees to earn up to eight hours of compensatory time every month for mentoring. Several states already do this. The Senate version of my legislation passed that body but failed in a House committee.

COMPETING FOR WORK

State employees should be given the opportunity to show that they can compete with private firms. House Bill 1320 would give them the chance to do so. It would evaluate the privatization of contracts more carefully and give our state employees a fair shake in that review process. Although this bill did not pass, I will reintroduce it next year.

EYEWITNESS IDENTIFICATION

Mistaken eyewitness identification played a role in convicting the vast majority of defendants later exonerated by DNA testing. I introduced a bill requiring law enforcement agencies to preserve a record of the procedure used to obtain such testimony and make it available to the defendant. An amended version died on the last night of session.

41ST DISTRICT UNITY TEAM

I am pleased to inform you that Senator Gladden, Delegates Carter and Oaks, and I will be running together for re-election. We have served the district well over the last

four years, as evidenced by what we have accomplished on neighborhood issues this session. We will be campaigning together between now and the primary election on September 12. We hope you feel that we have earned your support.